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Official Records

45th plenary meeting
Thursday, 29 November 2012, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Flores (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/364)

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20)

The Acting President: The Assembly shall now continue hearing statements in explanation of vote on resolution 67/19.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): I thank the President for the opportunity to explain our vote today. At the outset, allow me to commend the presence of President Mahmoud Abbas, who carries with him the aspirations of the people of Palestine. On this special day, we also wish to extend our hand of friendship in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We are pleased that today the Assembly has taken time to revisit its previous commitments to Palestine dating back to 1947, which gave hope for the existence of independent Arab and Jewish States. Today the Assembly has reaffirmed its previous decisions by granting Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations.

On several occasions, the Assembly has reasserted its commitment in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. We have often joined in reaffirming the vision and objective of the two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side within secure and recognized borders. We have witnessed numerous pledges of support for that cause. We have heard many voices pleading to see that struggle brought to its conclusion. The right things have been said over time. Now the right thing has been done, even if it still falls short of Palestine's full membership in this body. The promises and commitments made have to be kept.

Our vote in favour of resolution 67/19 granting non-member observer State status is an illustration of our support for the legitimate cause of the people of Palestine. The resolution presented the Assembly with yet another opportunity to recognize the independent State of Palestine, as it has recognized the State of Israel. To the United Republic of Tanzania, both States are a reality. The United Republic of Tanzania recognized Palestine as a State at its independence in 1961 and established diplomatic relations soon thereafter. We have always expressed solidarity with the people of Palestine in their quest to realize their inalienable right to self-determination. We are optimistic that the enhanced status granted today by the Assembly to the State of Palestine will provide renewed impetus to the parties to pursue vigorously all efforts to create a conducive environment for the resumption of direct and meaningful negotiations, as called for by the Secretary-

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General in his report before the Assembly today (A/67/364).

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Tanzania's undying commitment to the establishment of an independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and within secure and recognized borders, with the State of Israel.

Mr. Nazario (South Sudan): In voting in favour of resolution 67/19, South Sudan supports the right to self-determination of the people of Palestine. As outlined in the resolution, the self-determination of all peoples is a right guaranteed under the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as a host of declarations and resolutions of the General Assembly. Indeed, that principle accounts for the independence of many countries represented in this global Organization.

Although an established right, self-determination is nonetheless constrained by a number of contradictory qualifications in international law, such as the affirmation of the sovereignty of the nation State and the territorial integrity of State borders. Except for the well-recognized independence from colonial domination, self-determination is always contentious.

As is well known, we in South Sudan achieved our post-colonial self-determination from the Republic of the Sudan after a struggle that lasted half a century. In the end, we achieved our self-determination as the result of a negotiated peace agreement. That is why we believe that, in the context of a conflict between two identity groups contesting the right of self-determination and the establishment of an independent State that would qualify for membership in the United Nations, the most practical and viable outcome is a negotiated agreement. Even with an agreement that results in independence, as our own case between South Sudan and the Sudan testifies, problems can also arise after the exercise of self-determination resulting in independence.

That is why we voted for the principle of self-determination for the people of Palestine, but encourage the parties to negotiate an agreement that can guarantee self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. Therefore, my country supports the continuation of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians aimed at establishing two viable States living side by side, as provided for by the 1993 Oslo Accords.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands): The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, which will be made during the debate later on.

The Netherlands strongly supports a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians on the basis of a two-State solution, based on the borders of 1967, whereby the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine will be living side by side in peace and security. Such an agreement would bring a much needed end to the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis and would also benefit the stability and prosperity in the region as a whole. The current status quo is untenable.

The Palestinian aspiration, as expressed in resolution 67/19, is legitimate, and the Netherlands supports the Palestinian efforts to achieve statehood. However, we would have preferred the resolution to be postponed, as its adoption at this moment could complicate efforts to resume direct negotiations between the parties. For that reason, the Netherlands decided to abstain.

The Netherlands calls for an urgent resumption of negotiations leading to an end of the conflict through a comprehensive peace agreement on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions; the Madrid principles, including land for peace; the road map; the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Netherlands stands ready to support those negotiations and will continue to support both Israel and the Palestinians bilaterally, taking into careful account the aspirations of the Palestinians for statehood and those of the Israelis for security.

We urge both sides to take the necessary steps to make progress towards a final peace agreement and to refrain from actions that might undermine the prospects for a two-State solution. In particular, we call on Israel to end all settlement activities. The Netherlands urges the international community, in particular the Quartet, to offer its full support for the achievement of a comprehensive peace agreement.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): Japan has long understood the Palestinians' aspirations to build an independent State and has supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Japan therefore endorses the two-State solution, under which Israel and a future independent Palestinian State would coexist side by side in peace and security. In the light of that, Japan

voted in favour of resolution 67/19, on the status of Palestine in the United Nations.

Japan believes that, following the adoption of that historic resolution, Palestine will assume greater responsibility as a member of the international community. We strongly urge Palestine to exert more earnest efforts towards the realization of peace in the Middle East. Japan requests both Palestine and Israel to establish relations of mutual trust and to promptly return to the negotiating table with a view to realizing the two-State solution. Japan will also continue to make an active contribution to moving the peace process forward in cooperation with the United States, the Arab countries and other partners. It is not acceptable to use the resolution just adopted to act in a way that could negatively affect or hinder direct negotiations with Israel.

Israel, for its part, should improve the environment so as to promote the resumption of peace negotiations, including by freezing settlement activities. In that regard, Japan makes the two following requests of Palestine in relation to the resolution.

First, we call on Palestine to immediately resume direct negotiations with Israel in order to move the peace process forward in a tangible way in cooperation with the international community. Secondly, we call for prudence in its conduct, such as with regard to accession to international organizations. Such actions might negatively affect the prospects for the resumption of negotiations.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Sixty-five years ago today, this body adopted resolution 181 (II), which established the Plan of Partition of the territory under British mandate in Palestine. Costa Rica was one of the 33 countries that, at that time, recognized that the coexistence of two independent States was the necessary solution.

Costa Rica voted in favour of resolution 67/19, on the status of Palestine, which enables it to become a non-member observer State to the United Nations, in the belief that that step reaffirms the desire of both peoples for peace. We also believe that it helps to preserve the two-State solution, which improves the prospects for future negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Furthermore, our decision is consistent with the recognition that we granted to the State of Palestine in 2008 and with our support for its admission into UNESCO. The current leaders of the Palestinian National Authority and of Israel deserve our support. They are the legitimate alternatives to terrorism and extremism and to the many actors seeking to thwart peace.

Costa Rica underscores the fact that peace will be the result of moderate voices that accept the coexistence of two independent States, living side by side in security within internationally agreed and recognized borders. In that conviction, Costa Rica has always advocated and will advocate for the right of Israel to exist free of external threats, in particular that of terrorism. Similarly, Costa Rica is convinced of the need for the existence of an independent, sovereign, democratic and viable Palestinian State. It is the fervent goal of our country that the parties, working together, should resolve the differences that have so long thwarted the right of both peoples to live in peace and security.

We strongly appeal to the authorities of Israel and Palestine to return to negotiations on the core outstanding issues of the conflict in the understanding that such negotiations would be based on existing obligations and previous agreements of the parties, in accordance with international law and Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala abstained in the voting on resolution 67/19, just adopted, despite the fact that we accept the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination and firmly support the establishment of an independent and sovereign State for the Palestinian people under the well-known formula of two States living side and side in peace within secure borders.

The reason for our abstention is that we are not ready to grant observer State status to an entity that we have still not recognized as a State. We remain convinced that reaching the final stage of establishing the State of Palestine should come as the outcome of direct negotiations between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel. We think that that formula is the only way to ensure peace, security and stability, not only between Israel and its immediate neighbours but also in the entire Middle East.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain voted in favour of resolution 67/19, on the status of Palestine in the United Nations. Our vote demonstrates the firm and irreversible commitment of my country to a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Having said that, Spain aligns

itself with the statement to be made later today by the observer of the European Union.

If the peace process had moved forward, in line with the road map outlined in the Quartet's statement of 23 September 2011 (SG/2178), perhaps today's vote could have been avoided. Regrettably however, the peace process has remained at an impasse, and threats to the viability of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living together in peace and security, have increased.

Spain is convinced that the establishment of an independent, sovereign, democratic and viable Palestinian State is key to resolving the conflict and that that will positively affect the security and well-being of Israel, the normalization of regional relations and the entire international community. A just and peaceful solution can only come as the result of negotiations between the parties based on relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Quartet road map and the agreements that were previously reached. The Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 is another important tool for achieving a solution.

In that context, Spain calls upon the Government of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority to urgently go back to the negotiating table, without preconditions and in good faith, while rejecting any act or measure that might postpone the peace that we all yearn for.

Mr. Pintado (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Mexico voted in favour of resolution 67/19. However, we would like to explain our position on that subject.

Mexico reiterates its full and unconditional support for resolution 181 (II), in which the international community decided to establish two States, an Arab State and a Jewish State. Mexico has not strayed from that historical position. Without reservations, we declare that Israel and Palestine have the right to live as independent and democratic States that coexist in peace within safe and internationally recognized borders. We know that the adoption of the resolution today will not per se substantially change the conditions that prevail in that region.

However, we harbour the hope that the decision that we have taken will provide a vigorous impetus, in the end, to make the long-yearned for comprehensive solution to the conflict on the basis of two States a reality. That is why Mexico urgently calls for the resumption of the peace process through direct negotiations between the parties without preconditions and with a genuine desire to find a solution to all of the outstanding issues, such as the definition of the borders, the question of refugees, security arrangements and the final status of Jerusalem.

Mexico expresses its support for the leadership of the Palestinian National Authority as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and we urge it to comply with its responsibilities and not delay in resuming negotiations. Mexico condemns all acts of provocation or violence, which mainly affect the civilian population of either party. Those acts have mostly come from terrorist groups that do not recognize the right of Israel to exist and which represent an ongoing threat to stability in the region and to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Makharoblishvili (Georgia): At the outset, allow me to note that Georgia has aligned itself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the observer of the European Union on the issue at hand. Nevertheless, I would like, in my national capacity, to provide a few additional points that we deem important to explain why Georgia voted in favour of resolution 67/19.

Georgia reaffirms its commitment to a two-State solution and its conviction that progress in the Middle East peace process is urgent. As a country in proximity to the Middle East and sharing its historical heritage and geographic predicaments, we are sympathetic to the aspirations of the people in the region, including those of the Palestinians for statehood and those of the Israelis for security. Both are crucial elements for achieving lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the wider region.

Ending the conflict is of paramount importance, and that can only be achieved through a comprehensive peace agreement based on negotiations between the parties. We therefore urge the parties to resume negotiations without preconditions, and we welcome the positive signals that we have heard in recent days to that end. Our understanding is that the resolution confers on Palestine privileges and rights that are equivalent to those of non-member States and only within the General Assembly. Georgia does not consider that the decision endows Palestine with the automatic right to join international institutions and treaties as a State. It must also be considered to be without prejudice to the need for direct bilateral negotiations in accordance with existing agreements between the parties to establish

a Palestinian State living in peace and security with Israel.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): The Government of Jamaica voted in favour of resolution 67/19 on the status of Palestine in the United Nations based on a firm commitment to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Jamaica has long held the position that a solution to the situation in the Middle East can be brought about only through the peaceful negotiated settlement of a two-State solution. Jamaica has historically sought to maintain a balance on that issue, which, of course, includes Israel's right to exist within secure borders.

Jamaica fully respects and abides by the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law. Our support for the resolution is therefore based on the understanding that the granting of non-member observer State status to Palestine within the United Nations is on the same basis as that given to the Holy See. For Jamaica, support for non-member observer State status within the United Nations for Palestine is not equivalent to support for automatic or immediate membership by Palestine in the United Nations. Our position on the resolution is therefore without prejudice to any future decision that the Government of Jamaica may take in relation to any application by Palestine for full membership in the United Nations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation voted in favour of resolution 67/19 to raise the Palestinian status in the United Nations to that of non-member observer State. That step is in keeping with the position of principle of our country. As is well known, Russia decided, in 1988, to recognize the declaration of Palestinian statehood. For some time now, there has been a working Palestinian Embassy in Moscow.

We consider the support given to today's resolution by the majority of the countries of the world serves as an important milestone in reinstating historical equality. On this day 65 years ago, a well-known resolution was adopted on the partition of the Palestinian mandate into two States (resolution 181 (II)). Half of the resolution was implemented, and now it is important that an independent and viable Palestinian State exist side by side with Israel in peace and security.

In the view of authoritative international organizations, influential regional groupings and the majority of countries of the world, the Palestinian National Authority has been able over the past few years to take great strides forward in establishing a Palestinian State by laying the necessary foundations. The primary issue hampering the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people is foreign occupation. In voting in favour of the resolution, we took into account the assurances given to us by the Palestinian Government regarding the fact that the step they have taken does not seek to target Israel, nor does it seek to isolate that country, and that there is no alternative to political negotiations to resolve the issues.

We are counting on a responsible and measured reaction from Israel and other interested parties regarding the upgrading of the status of Palestine in the United Nations. We believe that any activities aimed at taking revenge on the Palestinians for their political approach in the United Nations would constitute the collective punishment of a people as a whole and that, for us, would be categorically unacceptable. We believe it important that, as promised by the Palestinian National Authority, the upgrading of the Palestinian status in the United Nations should lead to a swift resumption of substantive negotiations between Palestine and Israel on all final status issues.

For its part, Russia, as an active member of the international community and the Quartet, will continue to do its utmost to foster, in the Quartet talks among other forums, a resumption of Palestinian-Israeli talks on the basis of accepted international law. In order to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the status of a Palestinian-Israeli settlement and overcome the stalemate, we have called for the convening of a ministerial meeting of the Quartet.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): I take the floor to explain Papua New Guinea's vote on resolution 67/19. Papua New Guinea recognizes both Israel and Palestine and will continue to do so. Papua New Guinea has continued to abstain in the voting on many issues that concern both Israel and Palestine. That is on the basis of the belief that, ultimately, any resolution of that long outstanding and protracted matter is for the people of both Israel and Palestine to determine. Regrettably, too many lives have been lost, and there has been untold suffering and immeasurable damage to property belonging to both parties over too many years, especially during the past few weeks. Papua New Guinea commends all the parties who were able

to secure the recent ceasefire, which is by all accounts holding up.

Papua New Guinea's own experience of a bloody internal civil conflict, which ended with a peace process, continuously serves to reminds us that the parties to a conflict must sit down and negotiate their peace in good faith, as there is no other credible process. Without that important and fundamental step, any other form of negotiations must and will fail. We therefore urge both Israel and Palestine to resume peace talks as soon as practicable and without preconditions. We continue to strongly support the two-State solution, and it remains our hope that the peoples of both Israel and Palestine will one day soon live side by side, within properly secured borders, under a durable, just and long-lasting peace.

It is from that perspective that Papua New Guinea abstained today. We respect the outcome of the General Assembly's vote, while we also remain mindful of the fact that it is the Security Council's mandate to decide on Palestine's full membership to the United Nations.

Mr. Shin Dong Ik (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea sympathizes with the motivations behind the resolution put to the vote today (resolution 67/19), and fully understands the Palestinian people's desire for an independent State. On the other hand, the Republic of Korea is deeply concerned about the results that this resolution might bring about. Accordingly, my delegation chose to abstain. That abstention is an expression of our frustration regarding the lack of meaningful progress on the Middle East peace process. We continue to retain a sincere hope for such progress. My delegation would like to reiterate its support for the two-State solution. What is most needed now is to provide new momentum to the peace process. In that regard, it is clear that the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine can be achieved only through dialogue and negotiation.

The Republic of Korea is deeply saddened by the loss of life cause by the recent armed conflict, and welcomes the announcement of the ceasefire brought about by the efforts of the Secretary-General and other leaders of Member States. However, the current status of the ceasefire is still fragile, and there remain differences that need to be addressed through dialogue with a sense of urgency. The Republic of Korea hopes that Palestine and Israel will resume their negotiations as soon as possible to explore a permanent solution to this important issue.

Mrs. Miculescu (Romania): Romania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and would like to add the following in its national capacity.

Romania's abstention today is based on a position of principle that my country has consistently held, namely, on the need to promote dialogue and direct negotiations between the parties, within the internationally accepted settlement frameworks and existing agreements. Based on that belief, Romania does not favour unilateral initiatives, regardless of which side they come from, as they may have adverse effects on the resumption of the peace process negotiations.

Resolution 67/19, just adopted, does not facilitate the recognition of Palestine as a State or its accession to international organizations and treaties. While we recognize those goals as legitimate objectives of the Palestinian people, Romania strongly believes that the only way to fulfil the vision of a two-State solution is the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian direct negotiations. We urge the parties to engage in that process without preconditions. Romania will support any initiative that could serve that purpose. We share the position that the only viable solution is still the one promoted by the Quartet road map, which advocates for the existence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): Portugal welcomes the adoption of resolution 67/19, which grants non-member observer State status in the United Nations to Palestine. Portugal has long defended the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination through the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State. We have done so bilaterally and most recently in discussions within the European Union, where we have from the outset defended the reasons for a positive vote on that Palestinian quest.

Portugal upholds the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders. We also firmly believe in a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the two-State solution, the Quartet road map, the internationally endorsed parameters for final status issues, the agreements reached between the parties, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

True to those long-standing positions, Portugal has voted in favour of the enhancement of Palestine's status in the United Nations. We have also done so in recognition of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad and their unwavering commitment to dialogue and a peaceful resolution to the conflict and their efforts in preparing the Palestinian institutions for statehood. In our view, the rejection of violence and the choice of the diplomatic channel are fundamental tenets for achieving peace.

Portugal is hopeful that the resolution just adopted will provide much needed impetus to the peace process. A just, durable and comprehensive peace can only be reached through direct negotiations. We therefore urge the parties to resume negotiations with no further delay or preconditions. We welcome in that regard President Abbas' statement to the Assembly reiterating his commitment to the peace process (see A/67/PV.44).

The international community must now exert all efforts to ensure the swift resumption of credible negotiations with a view to a final settlement that brings about the realization of the two-State solution of an independent, sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, while ensuring an enduring peace for all peoples in the region.

Portugal naturally aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered later on by Ambassador Mayr-Harting on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Reetoo (Mauritius): Mauritius has always supported the early realization of the Palestinians' long overdue right to self-determination and the establishment of their sovereign, independent Palestinian State, living side by side and at peace with the State of Israel, within secure borders on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. In furtherance of that policy, Mauritius has unwaveringly supported all United Nations and other initiatives aimed at an early resolution of the conflict-ridden situation in the Middle East.

Mauritius and the Palestinian National Authority maintain strong relations. On the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Mauritius reaffirms our strong solidarity with our brothers and sisters of Palestine. We hope and pray that the legitimate and long-standing aspirations for statehood and lasting peace and prosperity will materialize soon. We also reiterate that Mauritius remains fully committed to the just Palestinian cause.

Mauritius firmly believes that the question of Palestine can and must be resolved through peace and dialogue. Accordingly, we have committed our support to the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative. Mauritius also believes in a two-State solution, where the State of Israel and Palestine can live alongside each other in peace within secure borders.

It is unfortunate that there has been little headway in the peace process in the recent past. In fact, the Israeli settlement policy challenges the credibility of that process and remains one of the biggest hurdles to the resumption of peace talks. We are concerned that the continued stalemate and the hardening of the Israeli position are undermining the peace process.

In a message that the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, addressed to the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Prime Minister clearly stated that Mauritius fully endorsed the application that it boldly submitted during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. He added that Mauritius would likewise support the draft resolution relating to the enhancement of the status of Palestine.

In that spirit, Mauritius fully supports the admission of Palestine as a full United Nations Member. We applaud the statesmanship that President Mahmoud Abbas demonstrated last year when he boldly submitted the application for full United Nations membership. We salute his wisdom and courage in that regard.

On this historic day, therefore, Mauritius unconditionally endorses and supports the move for Palestine to become a non-member observer State in the General Assembly, as we did for Palestine's successful bid for membership of UNESCO. It will no doubt be a major step forward and paves the way for the ultimate fulfillment of the legitimate administration of our Palestinian brothers and sisters. At the same time, we call for the Palestinian issue to retain primacy on the international agenda until an enduring and lasting solution is reached.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

The General Assembly will now continue its debate on agenda item 37. I give the floor to those members wishing to make general statements.

Mr. Kahlil (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt congratulates the Palestinian people on their State obtaining non-member observer status in the United Nations, following the adoption of resolution 67/19. The adoption of the resolution by a majority of more than two thirds of the United Nations membership reflects the international community's recognition of Palestine's right to a Government, with all the components of a State and a territory with specific features despite the occupation and ongoing attempts of the occupying Power to annex increasingly large swathes of territory through settlement activities or other illegal actions, in complete violation of international law and the principle of the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

The granting to Palestine of observer status as non-member observer State in the United Nations is a long-awaited and historic step that will enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their fundamental inalienable rights, in particular with regard to establishing an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. It provides the Palestinian people with the appropriate legal tools to respond to the crimes committed by the occupying Power with all peaceful and legal means and to ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes are brought to international justice.

Today, the international community has affirmed that it is capable of taking the right decision when Member States have the political will to do so. We therefore hope that, in the near future, the Security Council will assume its responsibility and take the appropriate decision to accept Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations so that it can control its own natural resources and end Israel's suppression of its people and land.

The resolution is an example of the ways in which the international community can ensure a peace process. More than 20 years after the 1991 Madrid Conference, and 30 years after the Camp David negotiations of 1979, which set out the essential elements for a two-State solution, including a Palestinian State, Israel is clearly not serious about achieving peace. The occupying Power relies on a negotiating strategy that leads nowhere. It is now creating a pretext not to relaunch negotiations by accusing the other party of violating international law and of failing to respect the previous negotiations.

Egypt therefore reaffirms the importance of returning to the negotiating table on the established basis, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. We emphasize the need to put an end to the systematic settlement activities undertaken and supported by the Israeli Government. A specific timeframe for negotiations must be established that ensures a clear mechanism for future negotiations, with the provision of international guarantees to ensure that all parties fully respect all agreements. The negotiations that led to the cessation of the recent hostilities in Gaza show that it is indeed possible to achieve peace if all parties assume their responsibilities.

Finally, we call on all parties, in particular Israel, the occupying Power, and the major donor countries to refrain from unilateral measures in order to put pressure on Palestine and to prevent it from claiming its rights. Experience has shown that such measures only strengthen the resolve of the Palestinian people to uphold their legitimate rights, which are supported by the international community.

The resolution adopted today provides a historic opportunity to encourage all parties to return to the peace process in good faith and to achieve peace and security for all peoples of the region. Egypt will do its utmost to facilitate the resumption of negotiations in order to ensure that the rights and interests of all relevant parties in the region are met.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine".

Given the time constraint, I will present a condensed version of my statement on behalf of NAM. The full text of the statement is being distributed.

This important debate coincides with the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is an important day not only for Palestine, but also for those of us who strongly believe in the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination and to free themselves from foreign occupation and oppression. On this day, the international community reaffirms its continued and unwavering support for and solidarity with the long-suffering people of Palestine in their national struggle to achieve the independence of their State, as well as peace and justice. NAM pays tribute to the resilience

of the Palestinian people in their pursuit of their legitimate national aspirations, which for too long they have unjustly been denied.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its grave concern regarding the critical situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of Israeli's prolonged military occupation and illegal policies and practices. We condemn Israel's ongoing military raids and attacks against the Palestinian civilian population, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, its settlement colonization campaign, involving, inter alia, land confiscation, the construction and expansion of settlements and outposts, the transfer of hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers, the construction of the wall, the demolition of homes and the imposition of severe restrictions on movement and hundreds of checkpoints. We condemn the detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians, the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, reprisals against the civilian population and all other measures of collective punishment against the Palestinian people. Those acts are grave breaches of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

Unfortunately, today's meeting comes at a time when Israel, the occupying Power, has escalated its military campaign against the Palestinian people, in particular in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli attacks on Gaza during an eight-day period this month reportedly caused the killing of approximately 170 Palestinians, including women and children, and the wounding of about another 1,200. The situation in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is also deteriorating as a result of Israel's excessive use of force aimed at intimidating and terrorizing the Palestinian civilian population.

The Non-Aligned Movement strongly condemns the recent military campaign against the Palestinian people and underlines that, in addition to violating countless provisions of human rights law, such military aggression and collective punishment measures by Israel, the occupying Power, are tantamount to grave breaches of international law, including international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant United Nations resolutions. Such actions pose a serious threat to international peace and security and to regional stability.

In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement calls for accountability for the perpetration of war crimes by the occupying Power in its most recent military aggression against Gaza in order to end Israeli impunity and to realize justice for the victims.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to pursue its illegal settlement activities, along with many other illegal policies and practices, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The situation continues to be most severe in the Jordan Valley, where thousands of Palestinians have been displaced and thousands more are at risk of displacement due to Israel's illegal colonization in and around occupied East Jerusalem. At the same time, the occupied Power continues to pursue measures aimed at the quiet transfer or depopulation of the indigenous Palestinian inhabitants and at ensuring that there is a Jewish majority in the city.

In that regard, NAM calls for a complete end to all settlement activities, demolition of homes, residency revocations, excavations, including near and around Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and the closure of Palestinian institutions in the city. We also condemn the terror, violence and provocation by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and property, including homes, agricultural lands and Muslim and Christian holy sites. We caution that such actions are fuelling religious sensitivities that risk further destabilization and that they must be brought to an immediate end by the occupied Power. NAM condemns Israel's continuing unlawful campaign of the arrest, detention and forced interrogation of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including children, women and numerous elected officials, who continue to be held under harsh and inhumane conditions and to be subjected to physical and mental ill-treatment.

In that regard, the Movement condemns, inter alia, Israel's use of torture and all other forms of physical and psychological mistreatment and deprivation of Palestinian prisoners, including the denial of family visits, access to education and adequate medical care and the inhumane use of solitary confinement. As stated in the declaration on Palestinian political prisoners adopted by the sixteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Tehran in August, the Movement is convinced that Palestinian prisoners should be immediately released and their plight addressed by the international community, in particular the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its serious concern regarding the dangerous impasse in the Middle East peace process due to ongoing Israeli

intransigence and illegal policies. That conduct continues to undermine the resumption of credible negotiations and to obstruct the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such Israeli behaviour and its refusal to commit to the internationally endorsed parameters for the two-State solution cast a dark shadow of doubt over Israeli's professed intentions. Instead, it underscores the belief that Israel's insistence on the negotiations path is merely for the sake of managing the crisis and entrenching its illegitimate military occupation, not to actually reach any comprehensive peace settlement.

In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement Committee on Palestine has welcomed all efforts and initiatives aimed at realizing the two-State solution and justice for the Palestinian people. It stresses the importance of the Assembly's granting non-member observer State status to Palestine, and expresses the hope that this peaceful multilateral initiative, consistent with United Nations resolutions regarding the question of Palestine — including the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the international consensus on a two-State solution — will positively contribute to salvaging the prospects for peace.

In conclusion, the Movement reaffirms its unwavering commitment to a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, and to the immediate restoration of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in the independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

I now wish to speak in my national capacity as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I would like to congratulate the Palestinian people and their representatives on the historic victory they achieved today in the Assembly, which truly represents the entire world. I would also like to read out a message of solidarity with the Palestinian people from Mr. Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

> "For more than 60 years, the question of Palestine has been of central concern to the free nations of the world. The cruel occupation of Palestine and displacement of its nation are considered to be not only a deprivation of the Palestinian people of their fundamental and legitimate rights, but also a violation of universal human values and a flouting of the wisdom, logic and common sense of all humanity.
>
> "The crisis in the region, which has lasted for several decades, is the unpleasant consequence of the occupation of Palestine. The expansionist, militaristic and inhumane policies of the occupying and fabricated Zionist regime have resulted in continued instability and violence in the region, the imposition of five wars on nations of the region, the killing and imprisonment of tens of thousands of people, and the displacement of millions of others. The recent aggression in Gaza was yet another clear indication of the true uncivilized nature of the Zionists and their mission.
>
> "The failure of the international community in addressing the question of Palestine is the product of the discriminatory and unilateral policies of some members of the Security Council, which have resulted in the continuation of the crisis and posed tremendous threats to international peace and security.
>
> "The great Iranian nation, while declaring its full solidarity with the suffering and oppressed people of Palestine, reiterates its continued moral support to them. The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that unless heed is paid to the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people, including to exercise their right to self-determination and the elimination of all acts of aggression and occupation against them, as well as the restoration of justice and dignity to them, it will be impossible to find a just solution to the crisis.
>
> "It is obvious that the best solution to the question of Palestine would be the holding of free and fair elections with the participation of all Palestinians, including Muslims, Christians and Jews. In that regard, the international community and the United Nations in particular have a vital, effective and legitimate role to play in resolving the question of Palestine and ending the conquest. Undoubtedly, the era of Zionism and occupation is over. The future belongs to the great nation of Palestine, to other free nations and to justice, empathy and freedom."

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The present statement is based on the declaration made on behalf of the European Union earlier today by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Albania; as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Today's decision of the General Assembly to accord non-member observer State status in the United Nations to Palestine comes at a time when the latest escalation in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has caused the death of a large number of innocent civilians. It is a bitter reminder of the urgent necessity to move forward towards the end of the conflict. Only a political solution to the conflict can bring lasting security, peace and prosperity to Palestinians and Israelis. A comprehensive negotiated peace, which is a fundamental interest of the European Union, as well as the parties in the region, must and can be achieved on the basis of a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and a sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, both living within agreed borders and enjoying peace and security.

The European Union has repeatedly expressed its support and desire for Palestine to become a full Member of the United Nations as part of a solution to the conflict. The European Union has also consistently worked to advance the Palestinian Authority's State-building efforts under Prime Minister Fayyad. It will continue to do so.

Recalling the Berlin Declaration of March 1999, the European Union reiterates its readiness to recognize a Palestinian State when appropriate.

Looking beyond today's vote, it is important for all parties and actors involved to work towards the settlement of the conflict with renewed purpose and a sense of urgency. The European Union recalls its well known positions on intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Abbas, settlements and Israel's security. The European Union calls on all parties to pursue actions conducive to creating an environment of confidence necessary to ensure meaningful negotiations, and to refrain from actions that undermine the credibility of the process. The European Union urges both sides to seek constructive ways to overcome the current obstacles to a resumption of direct negotiations without delay or preconditions. It welcomes in that regard the positive statements previously made by President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu, and urges them to maintain those commitments.

The European Union reaffirms its position that clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome, together with the avoidance of unilateral measures and acts on the ground that undermine confidence and the viability of the two-State solution. The European Union reaffirms that it will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties, and recalls its position on negotiations, including the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council in December 2009 and May 2012, as well as the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union in the United Nations Security Council on 21 April 2011 (see S/PV.6520). The European Union will work actively within the Quartet and with international partners in support of efforts to bring about substantive negotiations in the coming months.

Let me also briefly refer to the statement just made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and then in his national capacity. I should just like to say that it becomes problematic when a statement on behalf of a political group is then combined with a national statement of a divisive nature.

Miss Hassan (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to address the Assembly on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and to convey the message of our Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Ali Youssouf, as the President of the OIC.

(*spoke in English*)

We are gathered here today in the General Assembly to grant Palestine the status of non-member observer State, which is yet another affirmation of the international community's continued support to the Palestinian cause and of its solidarity with the Palestinian people. On behalf of the OIC group, I am pleased to express our gratitude to the United Nations and to all its organs for their work on that issue. In

particular, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, for their relentless efforts and initiatives in support of the Palestinian cause.

The OIC group believes that the international community has a special responsibility to help the Palestinian people realize their national rights to self-determination and sovereignty and their status as an independent State in the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as to find a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees in line with resolution 194 (III) of 1948. In that regard, the international community has had a historic opportunity this afternoon, as well as the responsibility, to reaffirm its solidarity with the Palestinian people and support their just cause for independence.

The Palestinians have been intensely negotiating with Israel in good faith for the past two decades to regain their territories and their inalienable rights, and to live in peace and security. Unfortunately, none of those legitimate goals has been achieved so far, and none appears within the grasp of the Palestinians in the short term, given Israel's permanent strategy of shifting the goal posts.

It is unfortunate that on this very day of solidarity with the Palestinian people and the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State, the prospects for peace and justice in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are being challenged by the colonial and discriminatory policies and illegal practices of Israel, the occupying Power. Israel continues to build illegal settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It is constructing an apartheid wall, restricting Palestinians' access to places of worship, encouraging escalating acts of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, denying the free movement of people and goods, and confiscating ever more Palestinian homes and land. Israel's violations of international law have become a daily practice, which is systematically undermining the prospects for a two-State solution.

The OIC group expresses grave concern at the situation in occupied East Jerusalem, where the Israeli settlement campaign is most intense, and calls for a complete end to all settlement activities, all excavations, including near Al-Haram Al-Sharif, all home demolitions and all residency revocations, as well as the closure of Palestinian institutions in the city. The Group condemns the terror, violence and provocation by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and property, including homes, agricultural land and Muslim and Christian holy sites, and it cautions that such actions are fuelling religious sensitivities that risk further destabilization. The occupying Power must immediately end such activities.

Moreover, Israel's escalating military aggression and the illegal blockade it imposes on the Gaza Strip are not only a collective punishment against 1.5 million Palestinians in the Strip. They also represent the continuation of a war crime against humanity, which must stop. In that vein, the OIC group once again calls on the international community, and on the Security Council in particular, to assume its responsibility to take the necessary measures for an immediate and permanent halt to the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. It is past time to end the Palestinian people's suffering and to provide them with the protection and the means needed to rehabilitate and reconstruct the Gaza Strip.

Palestine's accession to full membership in UNESCO last year was a sign of international recognition of the Palestinians' rights. That achievement illustrates the concrete and positive support for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. Similarly, the positive assessment by the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund with respect to the implementation of the Palestinian National Authority's 2009 plan for constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State within a two-year period is yet another strong indication of Palestine's readiness for independent statehood.

In conclusion, we believe that permanent peace between Israel and Palestine is the sine qua non for both peoples to focus their energies and resources on developing their societies in peace, harmony and coexistence. The OIC Group expresses its strong solidarity with the Palestinian people and commends all Member States for their overwhelming support in favour of resolution 67/19, which enabled Palestine to become a non-member observer State. By granting Palestine improved diplomatic status — even though only a symbolic milestone in Palestinian ambitions for statehood — they have brought Israelis and Palestinians a step closer to achieving a sustainable solution on the basis of two States living side by side in peace and security.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the Permanent Representative of the Sudan for his introduction, earlier today, of resolution 67/19, on Palestine's status in the United Nations, of which China was a sponsor. China also welcomes the presence of President Abbas and his important statement at today's meeting.

The resolution just adopted grants non-member observer State status to Palestine in the United Nations. That fully demonstrates the broad support of the international community for the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate national rights. It has also furthered international recognition of the State of Palestine and is another positive step by Palestine on its road towards independent statehood, as the result of long-term efforts on the part of Palestine and other Arab countries with the support of the international community.

China warmly congratulates the people of Palestine. China has always resolutely supported the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate national rights. Gaining independent statehood is the legitimate right of the Palestinian people and the basis and prerequisite for the realization of the two-State solution, with the two countries living peacefully side by side. China supports the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with full sovereignty and East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the 1967 borders.

China was one of the first countries to support the national resistance movement of Palestine and to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization and the State of Palestine. As early as 1988, China announced its recognition of the State of Palestine and established diplomatic relations with it. China supports Palestinian membership in the United Nations and other international organizations and expresses its understanding of and respect and support for the request of Palestine to become an observer State in the United Nations.

The Palestinian issue has always been at the core of the Middle East question. Only when the Palestinian issue is appropriately resolved can lasting peace and stability in the Middle East be realized. China expresses its deep concern over the protracted stalemate in the peace talks between the two parties. China hopes that all the relevant parties will resolve their disputes through political negotiations on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map for peace in the Middle East, with a view to establishing an independent State of Palestine, with Palestine and Israel living peacefully side by side.

Given the current situation, the resumption of the peace talks between Palestine and Israel is all the more important and urgent. The international community should adopt a more proactive and constructive attitude in pressing for peace talks and pushing both parties, in particular Israel as the stronger party, to adopt effective measures to remove the obstacles to the peace talks and re-establish mutual trust, so that negotiations can be resumed at an early date and substantive progress made. China will continue to play an active and constructive role in pushing for a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian issue.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The action taken by the General Assembly today is indeed a birth certificate for the State of Palestine, as President Abbas said in his statement earlier today (see A/67/PV.44). The adoption by a large majority of resolution 67/19, which grants Palestine the status of non-member observer State at the United Nations, is a historic achievement and a landmark in the struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve all their political rights, including the right to self-determination, and a recognition of an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 1967.

The adoption of the resolution sends a clear message to the Palestinian people of the firm support of the international community for its rights. The resolution, which was adopted by the vast majority of the members of the Assembly — with 138 countries in favour — calls for the implementation of the principles of the Madrid Conference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map called for by the Quartet, in order to reach a final solution to the crisis in the Middle East and address the six main points, which are: the return of the refugees, Jerusalem, the settlements, the borders, security and water.

The State of Kuwait congratulates the brotherly Palestinian people on the support of the General Assembly, which coincides with our celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We affirm our solidarity with and full support for the lawful aspirations and ambitions of the Palestinian people. We also reaffirm the strong commitment of the leadership, Government and people of Kuwait to continue their moral, political and material support until the Israeli occupation of the occupied territories

ends and the State of Palestine is established, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In that context, we reiterate our support for the resolution of the Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 12 November, which urges States that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so in order to consolidate the international consensus in favour of the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. We reiterate the call of the international community to the Security Council to respond to the Palestinian request to be granted full membership.

The military aggression by Israel against Gaza that began on 14 November and continued for eight consecutive days resulted in a huge loss of life and property: 168 people were killed and more than 1,200 suffered injuries, including women, children and elderly people. That constitutes clear evidence of the brutality of Israel in its aggression and its lack of good faith in peaceful negotiations.

The inability of the United Nations to oblige Israel to fulfil its international obligations and the lack of a sincere international will to confront the occupying Israeli authorities have encouraged Israel to persist in its intransigence, ignore international legitimacy and further pursue hostile expansionist policies. There is no better proof of that than the creation of 1,200 new illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the establishment of a military camp in the Mount of Olives area. That policy flouts international norms and laws, in complete disregard for the basic tenets of international law, in particular the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention.

Those practices and other violations, such as the continued blockade of the Gaza Strip, the confiscation of land, the demolition of homes, the continued arrests of the Palestinian people — arrests that do not differentiate between child, young man or woman — and the restrictions on the movement of goods and persons, are the main reasons for the continued tension and instability in the region and undermine the chances of reaching a final settlement to this conflict.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its call on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to its hostile practices and an immediate end to its unlawful blockade of Gaza and open all crossings, pursuant to its international obligations, stop all illegal settlement activities in the occupied territories, and implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1860 (2009).

The State of Kuwait renews its demand that Israel implement Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which calls for its withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and its return to the borders of 4 June 1967. We affirm yet again that Israel's continued occupation of Syrian land constitutes a major obstacle to achieving peace and security in the Middle East.

The State of Kuwait renews its commitment to steadfastly support its brotherly country Lebanon in safeguarding its security and territorial integrity. Kuwait demands that Israel stop its continued violations of Lebanese airspace and territory and implement resolution 1701 (2006) by completely withdrawing from all remaining occupied Lebanese territory.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I will now make a statement in my national capacity.

The Assembly will recall what Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated in his opening remarks at the beginning of its sixty-seventh session:

> "The two-State solution is the only sustainable option, yet the door may be closing for good. The continued growth of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory seriously undermines efforts towards peace. We must break that dangerous impasse." (*A/67/PV.6, p. 3*)

That task must ultimately devolve upon the United Nations. The Charter of the United Nations itself is founded on the principles of justice, peace, coexistence, security, fundamental human rights, human dignity and freedom. Each one of those has been established by practice and sustained by international law and norms. The principle of self-determination encompasses all of those principles and is the sole embodiment of the just and conscious expression of a people to their freedom, their rights and their dignity. Therefore, to deny that singular right is to deny all other rights.

Since 1947 the General Assembly and the Security Council have been seized of the situation in the Middle East. Specifically, in November 1967 the Security Council set forth the principles for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East in resolution 242 (1967). Subsequent resolutions have reiterated the

determination of both the General Assembly and the Security Council to resolve the question of Palestine on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Consistent with those resolutions, Nigeria staunchly believes in the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independent statehood. Indeed, Nigeria recognized the State of Palestine in 1984 and has maintained uninterrupted diplomatic relations with the Government and people of Palestine. It is in that context that Nigeria voted in favour of the admission of Palestine to UNESCO as a full member State. That principle also informs our stance today.

Nigeria believes that the two-State solution is the best option to resolve the protracted conflict in the Middle East. We reaffirm the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security, without the threat of annihilation, within internationally agreed borders. In the same vein, we underscore the right of the people of Palestine to live in freedom and to exercise their right to self-determination with all the benefits of statehood.

As the world observes the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is fitting that today we have accorded Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. It is not only timely; it is right and it is just. Nigeria will continue to work assiduously with the parties concerned and all people of goodwill to ensure an enduring peace in the region.

Mr. Laher (South Africa): It is with great joy that we stand here today to congratulate the people of Palestine for attaining an enhanced observer State status in the United Nations. Although that is not what we would have ideally wanted, because we support full membership in the United Nations for the State of Palestine, it is satisfying that the Organization has now cemented in the books of history the fact that Palestine is indeed a State. It is a historic achievement on the road to the creation of a viable Palestinian State that should, ideally, be celebrated by all.

This year has historical significance because it marks 45 years since the occupation of Palestinian land by Israel. If the South African experience is anything to go by, we are certain that the Palestinians, with the assistance of the international community, will prevail in their quest for a viable State of their own. The United Nations and the rest of the international community should play their part in ensuring that the aspirations of the Palestinian people are fulfilled.

We call on the international community to avoid any retributive actions that could stifle the very existence of the State of Palestine. We say that in view of threats from some that there would be negative implications for Palestine and the United Nations flowing from the success of the resolution adopted today, as we witnessed last November when Palestine joined the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The Middle East peace process, including the question of Palestine, has been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than 60 years. It is an indictment on the conscience of the United Nations that after all these years there still has not been any significant movement towards the attainment of a permanent and sustainable solution to the long, drawn-out crisis. Despite attempts to inject life into the negotiation process, the prospects for direct negotiations get dimmer by the day, as the Israeli Government continues its counterproductive acts of aggression, particularly ongoing illegal settlement construction, home demolitions, illegal excavations of religious sites and restrictions on the access and movement of Palestinian people.

The illegal Israeli settlements have led to a fragmentation of the West Bank and the isolation of Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories, and continue to threaten the feasibility of a contiguous Palestinian State. The continued failure to take any meaningful action to halt the settlements only serves to undermine our commitment to a two-State solution.

The recent events in Gaza were disturbing. They are a reminder of how fragile the security situation is without the fulfilment of a sustainable solution. South Africa is pleased that the ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian groups in Gaza is holding after so many people, including women and children, lost their lives. The violence also resulted in the obliteration of critical infrastructure, such as schools and medical facilities, which will take a long time to rebuild due to the blockade of the enclave. South Africa welcomes the mediation efforts of the Government of Egypt, other countries, the League of Arab States and the Secretary-General, which led to the implementation of the ceasefire and the restoration of calm.

At this point it is appropriate to ask: Where was the Quartet during the crisis in Gaza? The Quartet's silence during that critical time justifies the criticism that its utility should be urgently addressed, with a view to reconfiguring, strengthening or perhaps disbanding

it. As part of the Quartet, the Members of the United Nations have an obligation to ask such questions, lest we become a docile partner in this equation.

Likewise, we must also register our disappointment that the Security Council did not act at an appropriate time. That prolonged the conflict, which led to the loss of more lives. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to respond to threats to international peace and security wherever they may arise, and without prejudice. United Nations meetings that only pay lip service to the Middle East peace process do not translate into meaningful action, nor do they advance peace.

South Africa calls on the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve a permanent and sustainable political solution, namely, the implementation of a viable two-State solution that provides for the establishment of a Palestinian State existing side by side in peace and security with Israel, within internationally recognized borders based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also call on those countries that have leverage with the parties to encourage them to choose the path of negotiations instead of the destructive path of conflict.

While we condemn the actions of some Palestinian groups that fire rockets into Israel that directly threaten its civilian population, including women and children, we wish to reiterate that the continued occupation of Palestine remains the root cause of the conflict. The international community's demand that Israel end the illegal blockade of Gaza, which has exacerbated the suffering of ordinary Palestinian people, must be met. The blockade of Gaza continues to have a negative impact on the lives of its inhabitants and has contributed directly to the increase in unemployment and poverty.

It has also resulted in delays in the provision of humanitarian assistance, since it has thwarted the entry into Gaza of humanitarian agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Development Programme. We therefore call on Israel to end the illegal blockade of Gaza in observance of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and Security Council resolutions, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative. In keeping with its practice of contributing to the alleviation of the humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people, South Africa has donated the sum of 2 million rand to UNRWA.

Conflict between Israel and Palestine affects regional stability and has an impact on the fragile situation in the region. It thus becomes much more important that we find a resolution to the conflict.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that resolution 181 (II), adopted this very day 65 years ago, was a promissory note to the people of Israel and Palestine guaranteeing the creation of two States. Resolution 67/19, which we adopted today, is a further fulfilment of that promise. It proves that we cannot avoid the reality of an independent State of Palestine. It remains our responsibility to ensure that it is viable, contiguous and sustainable, so that it is in a position to live peacefully with its neighbour, the State of Israel. It is our duty to ensure that beyond today, the State of Palestine provides adequately for its population and enjoys the privileges that are inherent in statehood.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to congratulate Palestine today on being accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations. Our sponsorship and support of the historic resolution 67/19, adopted today, represents our firm conviction that international recognition of a Palestinian State is one essential element of the main responsibility of the United Nations regarding the Palestinian question, which has remained unresolved for 65 years.

Today's resolution is fully consistent with other United Nations resolutions that have outlined the principles of a just solution to this question, in particular resolution 181 (II), which divided historic Palestine into two States, one Jewish and one Arab, and unleashed a series of events that radically changed the geographic and political situation of the entire Middle East. Those events included the establishment of an Israeli State more than six decades ago and Israel's later obstruction of all efforts aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian State through its continued occupation of and dangerous policies in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967. They resulted in the prolongation of the suffering and tragedy of the Palestinian people, on the one hand, and had a negative impact on all efforts to consolidate regional and international peace and security, on the other.

We consider this historic recognition by the United Nations of the State of Palestine an important step towards settling the Palestinian question and

consolidating Palestinians' right to self-determination. It also represents an historic opportunity to overcome the political crisis and the no-peace situation that has resulted from Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian lands. We hope that it is a first step towards an independent State of Palestine's full membership in the United Nations, on an equal footing with all other States, since it is now recognized by an overwhelming majority of States Members of the Organization.

In the light of our deep concern about the stalemate in the peace negotiations, whose credibility has been put to the test by Israel's violations of its own commitments and obligations regarding the most basic legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and the terms of reference of the peace process, we urge the international community, especially the Quartet, to reactivate its initiative and efforts in that regard. We urge it to use its influence with Israel to immediately end its unilateral actions, which have caused the negotiations to stall.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns all hostile policies and serious acts of aggression committed by Israel to date, including its recent aggression against Gaza and deliberate targeting of unarmed civilians, including women and children. We urge the Quartet to reactivate its initiative and renew its efforts to pressure Israel to bring an immediate halt to all the unilateral actions that have obstructed peace negotiations. That should include the immediate cessation of all expansionist settlement projects and all efforts to change the demographic facts on the ground ahead of the final status negotiations.

Israel should also end all its other provocative illegal actions in East Jerusalem, including the demolition of homes, the confiscation of lands and water resources, the expulsion of Arab Palestinian inhabitants and other such demographic changes preceding final status negotiations. Such measures should help both parties to reach an agreement embodying a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, based on a two-State solution and within a specific time frame.

The United Arab Emirates will continue with its political support and development aid for the Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, and for all other efforts aimed at achieving Palestinian national reconciliation, in order to enhance security and stability in the Middle East, a goal that can be achieved only through a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Such a settlement requires that Israel immediately end all its policies of aggression against the Palestinian people. It should begin with Israel's full withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and the remaining occupied Lebanese territories. It should include the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the principles of the Madrid peace process and relevant international law, particularly General Assembly resolution 181 (II), Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the two-State solution set out in the road map, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): Brazil congratulates Palestine on this special occasion and reaffirms its full support for and commitment to the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Brazil has firmly supported the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people for a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, on the basis of the 1967 borders, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.

Sixty-five years ago, on 29 November 1947, the United Nations took a historic decision. The General Assembly, presided over by Brazilian Ambassador Oswaldo Aranha, approved the establishment of two independent States in the Middle East. However, to this day the unresolved question of Palestine remains one of the most significant threats to international peace and security. As President Dilma Rousseff stated in her address at the opening of the sixty-seventh general debate in September,

> "only a free and sovereign Palestine will be able to fulfil Israel's legitimate desires for peace with its neighbours, security in its borders and regional political stability" (*A/67/PV.6, p. 9*).

A Palestinian State has become even more urgent in the light of the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. That illegal practice remains a serious obstacle to peace and to the realization of the two-State solution. Freezing settlement construction is, however, not enough. The occupation must end.

The establishment of the Palestinian State is also the right response to the violence that has shortened the lives of thousands of innocent civilians, in particular in the occupied Palestinian territories. The recent escalation of violence in Gaza is yet another reminder of the high human and political costs of the paralysis of the peace process. Brazil firmly rejects extremism and all forms of violence against the civilian population. We call upon all actors to fully commit to non-violence, dialogue and effective negotiations. We recall that all parties to the conflict have obligations under international humanitarian law and must fully abide by them. We also insist on the need to lift the Gaza blockade.

Brazil reiterates its call on the Security Council to fully carry out its responsibilities. The promotion of peace in the Middle East is in the interest of all Members of the United Nations and cannot be delegated to third parties. An inoperative Quartet and a silent Security Council do not serve the interests of peace in the Middle East. Turning to the United Nations, as President Abbas has done today, is part of a peaceful and multilateral approach, one that is fully consistent with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. In the light of the current obstacles to the immediate admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations, we supported, as an interim measure, that Palestine be accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations. We express our great satisfaction at the unequivocal show of support that that request received from the international community.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba firmly supports the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. My country congratulates the Palestinian people and authorities on their victory in this Hall today on obtaining the new status of a non-member observer State.

With today's discussion on the situation of Palestine, we add to the long list of discussions in the United Nations that have not led to an effective solution that can put an end to Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people. Nor has it been possible, 45 years after the fact, to reverse Israel's 1967 occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel, the occupying Power, continues to defy the international community with its permanent transgression of international norms and treaties, including a long list of resolutions by this Assembly and the Security Council. Nor has it heeded the repeated calls by the Secretary-General and other directives from international organizations to halt its illegal activities and its crimes against the Palestinian people.

Israel has continued and intensified its illegal settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in violation of resolutions of the General Assembly, the Fourth Geneva Convention and its obligations under the arrangements set forth in the road map. Acts of violence by settlers against the civilian Palestinian population have increased without any measures to prevent them on the part of the occupying authorities, who have not taken the necessary legal steps to hold the perpetrators of such crimes responsible.

Israel has continued to build the illegal wall in the West Bank, including in occupied East Jerusalem and surrounding areas, in violation of the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice (see A/ES-10/273). The restrictions have prevented the majority of Palestinians from accessing medical, educational and social services as well as markets and sacred sites in East Jerusalem. The situation of women and children in the region is alarming. Children face particularly serious difficulties, such as a high dropout rate and a low level of scholastic achievement, which are attributable to the poor educational infrastructure, the lack of classrooms and the physical, bureaucratic and other obstacles imposed in order to limit access to educational facilities.

Those facts reflect only a small part of the information that appears in reports and corroborates the seriousness of the facts on the ground. There is sufficient reason to adopt not only political measures of condemnation, such as those that the Assembly is prepared to approve yet again, but also binding Security Council decisions to stop Israel's crimes and to punish those responsible. We wonder why the Security Council is so passive and inactive before such overwhelming evidence, why it does not move to sanction the perpetration of crimes against the people of Palestine, why it does not deprive those responsible of the financial resources that support their acts and why it does not limit their freedom of movement. We wonder why NATO does not express concern at the constant trampling of the human rights of the Palestinian people as a result of Israel's aggression. That issue makes clear the hypocrisy and the double standard of certain developed countries that have proclaimed themselves champions of the defence of human rights. The United

States of America prevents the Security Council from condemning Israel, a very different treatment from that which it applies to countries of the South when they oppose and denounce its imperialist policies.

For eight whole days, we witnessed yet another escalation of violence and death that the Israel Defense Forces unleashed in the Gaza Strip. Yet again, Israel, using its military and technical superiority to brutally repress the Palestinian people, caused innocent civilian victims and enormous material damage, which has exacerbated the already precarious conditions for people living in that small, besieged territory.

Cuba reiterates its most strenuous condemnation of that new act of aggression against the people of Palestine and calls on the international community to urgently take all necessary measures to prevent such actions from happening again. Cuba repeats its firmest support for the just cause of the people of Palestine and for their inalienable rights, which include the creation of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Cuba also supports the decision of its Palestinian brothers and sisters to apply for entry of their State as a full member of the United Nations. Resolution 67/19, which we have just adopted, marks a historic moment and should be a first step towards the entry of Palestine as a full member of the Organization.

This morning, we celebrated once again the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, following a tradition that has brought us together every 29 November since the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 32/40 B in 1977. In his usual message on that occasion, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba highlighted the undeniable proof of Palestine's commitment to the multilateral system, the progress of the authorities in strengthening State institutions, the robustness of those institutions and the ability of the Palestinians to exercise their sovereignty in an independent State. Likewise, he reiterated that the aggression against that fraternal people and the policy of illegal settlements have made it impossible to seek a just, balanced solution to the conflict.

Cuba reaffirms its determination to continue supporting the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle for justice, dignity, peace and their right to self-determination in an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Allow me to recall some moving verses of the great Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish on the dramatic history of his people:

> "To our land,
> and it is the one far from the adjectives of nouns,
> the map of absence ...
> To our land, and it is a prize of war,
> the freedom to die from longing and burning
> and our land, in its bloodied night,
> is a jewel that glimmers for the far upon the far".

Venezuela was called by the chroniclers of the Indies the "land of grace". Sephardic Jews escaping from the Inquisition found refuge in our land. They came in search of freedom, peace and happiness. Since the early twentieth century, hundreds of Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians from other parts of the world have arrived in Venezuela, attracted by the hope of a new life in our country. Their contributions to Venezuelan science, arts and letters have been enormous. Followers of Judaism have also arrived in our lands and have contributed to the progress and greatness of our homeland. We look back on that historical record because the three great monotheistic religions have peacefully coexisted, which confirms the solid democratic tradition of our people. Several hundreds of thousands of descendants of the Arab immigration currently live in Venezuela, as well as thousands of Jews, who contribute their "all for one", as Lope de Vega said, to the forging of Bolívar's homeland. Venezuela is a country profoundly committed to the principles and values of liberty, sovereignty, independence, peace, peaceful coexistence and respect for international law. That is why the Venezuelan community supports the Palestinian cause.

The Bolivarian Government and the people of Venezuela have condemned the actions of the State of Israel against the people of Palestine. It is our hope that there will be no further victims in the land where the great religions preaching peace and love emerged. We hope for a new era in which swords will be beaten into plowshares, as Isaiah prophesied. The National Assembly of Venezuela, the highest body of the legislative branch, issued on Tuesday, 20 November, a statement condemning the recent attacks on Palestinians in Gaza and decided to join today's celebration of the

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Gaza Strip is, as the great American Jewish intellectual Noam Chomsky said, the largest open air prison in the world.

Sixty-five years have passed since hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes and lands. Since then, they have become refugees or members of a colonized and oppressed people. On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which proposed the establishment of two States in the Palestinian territory. Scarcely a few days after the adoption of that resolution, a military offensive of territorial and demographic expansion began with the purpose of expelling Palestinians from their lands and preventing their return. The State of Israel was proclaimed unilaterally. On 15 May 1948, Al-Nakba began for the Palestinians. It was not only a process of expulsion of hundreds of thousands of people from their lands, but also an act of aggression against their cultural heritage and identity. A planned strategy to change the ethnic and cultural composition of the Palestinian territory was implemented.

A dense framework of inhuman policies was used to complete the segregation and control of Palestinians within the colonized territory. Laws were enacted and institutions were established that undermined the rights of Palestinians to their property and their land. With a proliferation of settlements in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank and the building of walls and checkpoints, the occupying Power has sought to permanently prevent or restrict the free movement of the Palestinian people. Thousands of Palestinian have been killed or imprisoned. At least 4,500 of them, including women and children, are in Israeli prisons. We call for their release. The occupying Power practices State terrorism. It has made Palestine a mourning and pain factory, violated international human rights law and international humanitarian law and failed to comply with hundreds of resolutions of the United Nations, which places the State of Israel on the fringes of international law.

The Israeli politico-military elite has committed many international crimes in Palestine. They have implemented apartheid, carried out ethnic cleansing, applied collective punishment to the civilian population and violated the Fourth Geneva Convention. They have also used weapons banned under international law on the civilian population. The war-mongering Israeli elite must therefore be held accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against the Palestinian people. However, it is timely to remind those who intend to subjugate the heroic Palestinian people ad infinitum of the sentence in the book of Ecclesiastes that says, "all is vanity and grasping for the wind".

The General Assembly cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of the Palestinian people brought about by the occupying Power. We pay tribute to the heroic Palestinian people and their historic leader, Yasser Arafat. The Government of President Hugo Chávez Frías has supported the application of Palestine for the status of observer State in the United Nations system and has sponsored the momentous resolution 67/19, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations". Today, we adopted that resolution by a broad majority, which grants the State of Palestine the status of permanent observer State. That is an important step on the road to its recognition as a Member State with full rights in the United Nations. Let us celebrate this historic decision taken by the General Assembly. Long live the free and sovereign Palestinian people.

Mr. Hassan (Malaysia): Malaysia would like to align itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Two weeks ago, Israel attacked the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. The attack caused the deaths of more than 165 Palestinians and injured countless others. The story remains the same, with Israel, seeing itself as a victim of numerous rocket attacks launched from Gaza, responding with a massive application of military power to what it terms terrorists, including children, women and the elderly. We are appalled that the international community took one week to stop the brutal and aggressive act by Israel.

The Parliament of Malaysia, on 19 November, passed a resolution condemning those attacks and stated its unwavering support for the Palestinians. The Parliament also sought for the Security Council to fulfil its Charter responsibility and for Israel to be held accountable for the crimes committed against the Palestinians. I wish to take the opportunity to express my delegation's sincere condolences to the Palestinian people who lost their lives in the defence of their homeland.

The attack on Gaza was one of many countless acts that Israel has committed in violation of international law, and I believe that it will not be the last. Israel's

defiance of international law has been well illustrated in the report by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35). The report shows that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has not improved and that Israel continues to violate international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

The occupying Power has continued to systematically demolish Palestinian homes, displacing the people of the land and intensifying the illegal settlement activity. There were 589 Palestinian houses and buildings demolished during the reporting period. In 2011 alone, 110 Palestinian homes were destroyed by the occupying Power, resulting in the further displacement of the Palestinian people. What is clear is that Israel intends to change the demographic reality on the ground.

The occupying Power has further revoked the residency status of over 14,000 Palestinians from Jerusalem, without reason or recourse. They have been denied entry into Jerusalem and their right of movement, and have thereby been further displaced from their own land. Meanwhile, Israel continues construction of the separation wall that further hampers the Palestinians from freely moving within the occupied Palestinian territory.

The violations do not stop there. My delegation is appalled by the increasing number of incidents of settler violence. It has been reported that over 500,000 Israelis are now living in 144 new settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Even more, the violence includes hit-and-run incidents and destruction of private property, including agricultural land. We believe that such practices constitute methodical efforts aimed at removing Palestinians from their homeland.

I earlier highlighted the recent Israeli attack on Gaza. At the same time, the future of Gazans continues to be grim, with the blockade entering its sixth year. The socioeconomic impact has been devastating. The blockade has rendered 80 per cent of Gazans dependent upon humanitarian assistance. Also, 44 per cent are food insecure, and 13 per cent are experiencing malnutrition, while 39 per cent of the people in Gaza continue to live in poverty. The situation in the Gaza Strip is unsustainable. The lives of 1.6 million Gazans are indeed in jeopardy.

The international community must bring about change. Israel's impunity must be ended and the rule of law must prevail. The construction of illegal settlements by Israel violates international law. If Israel is committed to a two-State solution, the settlements have to be dismantled, and no more new illegal settlements should ever be built on Palestinian land.

Israel must also realize the need to immediately lift the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip and allow the flow of supplies, materials and humanitarian aid to reach the people. Israel must accept that a lasting and just solution to the question of Palestine would not only benefit the Palestinians, but would contribute to Israel's own safety and security in the long run.

The international community must continue to support all of the recommendations submitted in the report of the Committee on its work for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, and a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulting in the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State living side by side with Israel, in peace and security, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

Today is an important day for all of us. We are observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I would like to take the opportunity to pay Malaysia's utmost respect and tribute to the Palestinian people for their courage and strength in continuing to demonstrate steadfastness, despite the immense hardship they face on a daily basis.

In solidarity with the people of Palestine, Malaysia reiterates its unwavering support of the aspirations of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. Malaysia fully supports the Palestinian application for membership in the United Nations, as it did with regard to its non-member State observer status in the United Nations.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by conveying our congratulations to the fraternal people of Palestine. We congratulate the Palestinians on their victory today through the efforts of Mr. Mahmoud Abbas. The adoption of resolution 67/19 by an absolute majority of the Assembly and on the strength of conscience, justice, fairness, patience is a new affirmation of the justice of the Palestinian cause, a justice that was beyond doubt.

The international community reaffirmed its commitment to a just cause that is recognized by all in order to meet the legitimate aspirations and hopes of

the Palestinian people. In that regard, Syria supports the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to create a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital and within the borders of 1967.

Palestine should be accorded full United Nations Member State status. The return of Palestinian refugees to their motherland should be guaranteed, as should the payment of fair reparations for all the suffering that has been endured, in accordance with resolution 194 (III), of 1948. We also recall resolution 273 (III), of 1949, which defines the conditions of Israel's membership in the United Nations and calls upon it to consistently uphold the principles of the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations. It also affirms the right of the Palestinian people to create an independent State and highlights the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their land, from which they were expelled by Zionist gangs. We call for reparations to be paid for those damages.

When Israel's membership in the United Nations was accepted, note was taken in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), of the commitment of Israel's representatives to implementing and fully upholding those resolutions. Israel's accession to the United Nations was contingent upon its commitment to the relevant United Nations resolutions on the creation of a Palestinian State and the return of its refugees. Unfortunately, however, that commitment has been deliberately and blatantly flouted in all settlement mechanisms of the Palestinian question and of all pending issues with respect to Israel. That is because of the public support of some powerful States, which are well known to all and which today voted against the resolution. That only encourages Israel to continue to thumb its nose at the international community and not comply with the relevant provisions of United Nations resolutions.

Israel continues its hostile practices and refuses peace. It sees itself as a State above the law and enjoys impunity. Those who protect Israel have affirmed to the Israeli authorities that they are above the law and that they will be protected within and beyond the United Nations and that their violations will go unpunished.

The Israeli occupation has turned the just Palestinian question into a simple series of numbers — victims, wounded, refugees. The Israeli authorities have engaged blindly in a war of hatred against the Palestinian people. They have imposed an unjust colonization and settlement policy against the Palestinian people, which is unjustifiable and has been passed over in silence by those who protect Israel.

More than 1,400 martyrs, including 437 children, were killed by the Israeli occupation forces during the barbarous attacks that took place in Gaza in late 2008. It is surprising that the Israeli incursion and the inhuman embargo imposed on the Palestinian people and land over several years were not enough for the Israeli authorities and did not satisfy their hatred. We are not talking about an embargo or blockade against Gaza alone, but about one against the entire Palestinian territory. The Israeli authorities resumed their barbarous aggressions against Gaza recently, leading to the deaths of more than 166 Palestinians, including several women and children, as we all know.

Israel has thus added to its black list a new crime against the peoples and States of the region, committed over the course of more than 60 years, during which time the Arab people have suffered occupation in Palestine, the occupied Syrian Golan and Lebanon. These people have suffered the worst war crimes, violations of human rights, forced displacements and other egregious crimes. It is the Palestinian people's right to live as other peoples in the world, in peace, freedom and dignity. However, that will prove impossible so long as Israel pursues its policies of aggression and continues to flout United Nations resolutions.

If some powerful States continue to bring pressure to bear so as to prevent the Palestinian people from enjoying their rights, and continue to support the blind and irresponsible occupation, imposing their narrow political agenda within the international Organization by sacrificing the principles of morality, justice and international law, their actions will undermine what remains of the credibility of the United Nations and threaten the very basis for collective work in the international arena, particularly in the area of international peace and security.

The picture is clear today — the Palestinian cause is a just one. We have borne witness to Israel's isolation through its aggressive policies, including those of occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people for more than six decades. Those policies can no longer be protected by Israel's partners. They have failed. Today, in the face of justice, the liars, the perpetrators of human rights violations, and all those who have worked against democracy have failed. Those who voted against resolution 67/19 laid bare their disingenuous policy

and political hypocracy with regard to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We continue to repeat, and shall do so today, that Israel should not occupy other people's land, attack others, or impose injustice and oppression on the Palestinian people. Israel would have been unable to carry out such policies without the support and protection of its partners, who have provided weapons, justified or obfuscated the occupation and aggression, and concealed human rights violations perpetrated by Israel since the 1950s. Those same partners, protectors and sponsors of the Israeli State attempt to justify Israel's refusal to participate in the Helsinki Conference, aimed at making the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone, a decision that was reached unanimously at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is increasingly clear that this is the picture we are facing today. Palestinians know who are their friends and who are their true enemies.

Those who voted against today's resolution are against the man who is indeed the Palestinian Gandhi, President Abbas. Those individuals have decided not to support President Abbas's moderation. How can we trust those States when they talk about upholding international law and international humanitarian law, as well as human rights in general and the rule of law? They point to these lofty principles but merely use such expressions rhetorically. What they are doing in reality is undermining the States and peoples who choose not to support their arrogance and oppression of justice among States Members of the United Nations.

We salute the Palestinian people and congratulate the Palestinian Authority, which, thanks to its political struggle and endeavours, has been able to defend the just nature of the Palestinian cause. But there is still work to be done. True justice means according Palestine full Member status; that will be justice. Today our Palestinian brothers are halfway to attaining that full right. We congratulate them once more.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to thank Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, Permanent Representative of Senegal, for his tireless efforts at the head of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I would also like to commend the Division for Palestinian Rights at the United Nations for providing information on all aspects of the Palestinian question.

Morocco associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and of Djibouti, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

We welcome the General Assembly's adoption by a large majority of resolution 67/19, which grants Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. We believe that to be another critical step on the right path to realizing Palestinian aspirations to full and complete membership of the United Nations, for which we hope we will see the necessary political will, and to its establishment as an independent and viable State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. On this happy occasion, I would like, on behalf of the King, Government and people of Morocco, to extend our sincere congratulations to the Palestinian people, wherever they may be, on this historic achievement.

In a message sent by His Majesty King Mohammed VI to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the eve of this meeting, His Majesty reiterated:

> "Today the United Nations is called upon to shoulder its responsibility and to accept Palestine as a non-member State. I wish to take this opportunity to renew my full support for the Palestinian National Authority, under the leadership of my revered brother His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas, on the occasion of the auspicious step he is taking. The Kingdom of Morocco calls for the mobilization of international support to back the measures taken by the Palestinian National Authority in order to obtain non-member Status. My country is of the view that negotiation is the best way to reclaim the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and set up an independent sovereign State".

The Assembly's resolution, adopted at this historic moment, embodies the firm will of the international community to effectively realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and achieve a peaceful settlement in the Middle East that will end the occupation and realize the two-State vision. That important step is the logical result of the stalemate in the peace process, following the expiration of the deadline set to reach a peaceful settlement on the basis of a two-State solution, specified by the international community here before the General Assembly. That effort on the part of the Palestinians is also the culmination of tireless Palestinian efforts to establish the basic tenets of an independent State, with functioning institutions,

and which have thus encouraged more than 135 countries to recognize it. Those efforts have also led to regional and international organizations recognizing and commending the effectiveness of Palestinian institutions, despite the challenges they face in assuming their responsibilities to the Palestinian people and the international community.

Today's resolution, which the Palestinian Authority has been working towards, enjoys the support of all Palestinian forces without exception, thus establishing another focus for efforts towards the long-sought goal of Palestinian national reconciliation. This is an occasion that may perhaps help to heal the wounds of the Palestinians of Gaza after the inhumane eight days of aggressive Israeli raids — aggression that has not let up for years.

We welcome the ceasefire and commend the efforts of the regional and international parties that have helped to secure it, but we hope that the international community will mobilize efforts to deal with the consequences of Israel's aggression against Gaza and to help Palestinian civilians return to their normal daily lives. We also look forward to the possibility that the ceasefire will encourage continued regional and international efforts to deal with the situation in Gaza through a new approach, leading to the opening of the border crossings, allowing the movement of people and goods, and ending the unjust blockade against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

At the same time, we stress the importance of continuing to support Palestinian refugees through United Nations programmes and agencies, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, with adequate means in order to meet the basic needs of Palestinian people in the territories where they operate.

This year has witnessed an unprecedented expansion of settlements in the Palestinian and Arab occupied territories. Settlements are the intractable obstacle to negotiations. The Israeli occupying Power has used its legal arsenal and military might, as well as its settlers, to change the demographic facts on the ground and to further annex Palestinian territories. As part of the same policies of aggression, East Jerusalem has witnessed extremely serious developments whereby the rate of settlement building has increased and military posts and tourist projects, as well as Government and civil institutions, have have been established — further steps aimed at isolating the city from its Arab and Palestinian environment. The King of Morocco, as Chairman of the OIC Jerusalem Committee, reiterates its strong condemnation of the accelerating settlement activities in Jerusalem, the birthplace of the three heavenly religions.

We reiterate our strong support of the Palestinian people in general, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in particular, in their peaceful struggle to hold on to their land, city and holy sites. We are deeply concerned by the stalemate in negotiations caused by Israeli policies of colonialism. However, we hold on to peace as a strategic option, and we strongly believe that the path towards peace must not be abandoned. We look forward to the dynamic that will be generated by international moves to put an end to the aggression against Gaza. We also welcome resolution 67/19 and other great developments in the Middle East. We hope that all of those developments will create a new, effective and serious approach to breaking the unprecedented stalemate in the peace process before it is too late.

Developments in the Arab region have inaugurated a new era in which peoples have regained their ability to contribute to their present and their future. It is in Israel's interest not to misread those developments. It should become actively involved by making efforts to create a just and comprehensive peace that ensures the realization of the legitimate Palestinian rights to establish their own independent and sovereign State within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. It should work for a final and permanent peace that provides security for all people in the region and pave the way for further withdrawal from other occupied Lebanese and Syrian territories.

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we would like to reiterate our full support for the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people to put an end to their suffering. We would like to reiterate our support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their rights to self-determination, to rid themselves of Israeli occupation, and to establish their own independent, sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

My delegation would like, at the outset, to congratulate the people and Government of Palestine for the historic decision by the United Nations to grant Palestine the status of non-member observer State as a prelude to attaining full membership. We are confident that granting the status of non-member observer State

will enable Palestine to play its role as a peace-loving nation committed to international law and instruments and as a factor for peace and stability in the region and the world.

The Palestinian people continue to live under occupation, violence and aggression, committed not only by the Israeli army but also by extremist settlers who are systematic in their aggression, while the occupying Power turns a blind eye and the international community remains alarmingly silent, condoning Israel's flagrant violations and not holding it accountable for its actions.

Israel's continued aggression against the Palestinian people and its fait-accompli policies encourage settlers to commit daily acts of aggression against Palestinians and their properties. Israel seeks through such practices to shirk its international commitments and to alter the demographic facts on the ground, changing the nature of East Jerusalem and its environs to remove their Islamic and Arab character, and to further annex Palestinian territories in a way that would make any future resolution based on a two-State solution impossible.

The blatant aggression experienced in Gaza, the continuing deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestinian people there, and the absence of a firm international position on Israel's repeated violations of international law and resolutions are evils the Palestinians in Gaza can no longer tolerate. In that context, the international community is called upon to take serious measures to break the stalemate in the negotiations on the just Palestinian cause and to relaunch negotiations based on international legitimacy and the terms of reference.

International efforts in recent years have focused on managing the conflict, but they have proven inadequate, and there is an urgent need to take serious steps to deal with the substantive issues. We must work together and direct our joint efforts towards creating a new dynamic to deal with the basic, substantive issues of the conflict.

We are all aware that the two-State solution is an important basis for any serious peaceful attempt to restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. That concept is based not on a vacuum, but on the decisions and resolutions of the United Nations and regional Powers. We must work hard to implement those resolutions. We are confident that it is still possible for the international community to put an end to the stalemate in the peace negotiations and to revive and give new momentum to the peace process. In that context, we hope that the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly and the Security Council, will continue to shoulder their historic responsibility in this sensitive time for the Palestinian question by focusing on the basic issues and working to settle the conflict through redoubled peace efforts.

Mr. Shaanika (Namibia): I thank you, Madame, for giving me the opportunity to address the General Assembly on this important agenda item. This afternoon, we had the privilege to welcome Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, to the General Assembly, and we congratulate him on the status and support he and his people received today.

While my delegation aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of Senegal on behalf of Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, allow me also to make additional comments on behalf of my country, Namibia.

Today we observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to highlight the plight of the people of Palestine, who for many years have endured great hardship under the Israeli occupation. It is our conviction that occupation of any territory by force is a moral scourge and politically unacceptable. In the twenty-first century, people everywhere on planet Earth are supposed to enjoy life in larger freedom and be guaranteed the right to determine their own future.

Today we adopted resolution 67/19, regarding the status of Palestine in the United Nations. The resolution tests the sincerity and commitment of all States Members of the United Nations to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the Organization. The people of Palestine have a genuine desire to exercise their right to self-determination. As a people who once lived under occupation and was subjected to the brutal apartheid system, we in Namibia know very well how it feels to live under foreign domination and dehumanization by the occupying Power. People in occupied territories are dispossessed of everything and live in constant fear of uncertainty. Quite often they watch the bulldozers tearing their houses down and their means of livelihood being destroyed. They watch helplessly as settlements are built on their land and walls of annexation erected.

We in Namibia have followed with great concern the confiscation of land and destruction of homes to make room for new Israeli settlements on Palestinian land. Yet, when the people of Palestine come to the United Nations to seek recognition, they are told that it is counterproductive to the peace process. One is left to wonder whether there is any grain of sincerity in the argument that seeking recognition of Palestine in the United Nations is counterproductive to the peace process. One is tempted to ask how support for the resolution adopted today and the call to end the illegal occupation of the Palestinian land can be considered counterproductive to the realization of a two-State solution. What about such provocative actions as the displacement of Palestinians, the mass detention of children, and the destruction of homes and means of livelihood? Do such actions contribute to the peace process?

In our view, the resolution we have adopted today is meant to enhance efforts leading to the creation of an independent, sovereign, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, which will coexist with Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders. My delegation does not consider voting in favour of the resolution to be counterproductive to the peace process, which has in any case has been at a standstill for the past few years.

As long as the people of Palestine are denied the right to self-determination, Namibia will continue to extend its unwavering support to and solidarity with them. We fully support the aspiration of Palestine not only in what they have achieved today, but we look forward to the day when the State of Palestine will finally join this family of sovereign and independent nations. The rights of the people of Palestine do not come from the generosity of the occupying Power; those rights are inherently endowed from birth.

Every country represented here in this assembly of nations is sovereign in its own right. Therefore, the action we take should be guided by our moral conscience in line with international law, and not by threat or fear of perceived threats. If we subject our action to fear, then our moral conscience will be taken hostage by the forces of fear. The Charter of the United Nations calls on all of us "to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security". It does not call for division through weakness and fear.

As we supported the resolution adopted today, we call on all the Palestinians and Israelis to find the courage to commit themselves to peace so that, when peace is finally achieved, they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree.

The meeting rose at 9 p.m.